[Joseph Reichenbach]

Joseph Reichenbach

German—employed by Seth Thomas Co. for 49 years

High street, Thomaston

“So you've talked to Mr Albecker, have you. Well, I didn't serve my t ime time in the same section, but pretty close by—about 40 miles away. ItS It's true, what he says, you didn't get any pay. And not only that, but you were 'bound' to the clockmaker. If you ran away, you're your people were responsible and had to pay for you.

“I had a close friend who ???? had gone to Scotland, and after I'd leanned my trade he wrote me to join him there. So I did. I went to work for the Singer Sewing Machine Company. No, clockmaking wasn't any use to me there, but the money was good. They paid a pound a week, which was considered a good salary in those days. But I wanted to come to American America and work at my trade.

“Friends had written me about clock making in Connecituc Connecticut, so I ? eventually landed in Thomaston. But when I got here I couldn't get into the clock shop. I had to take a job in the Eagle Lock Company in Terryville and work there six months before I there was an opening here.

“That was in 1881. I finally got a job with Old Mr Man S? Scheebel, who had a contract [truing?] and staking out wheels. Those contractors hated to give you a decent salary, though. Yes, there was a lot of it in those days—there was Heintzman, who had the contract for truing balances, and Saul who did the drilling and [Chiles?], who drilled pinions and Lehmann, who had the contract for turning [wor?]. They stopped giving contracts during the war, I think.

“Then I worked at model-making. For years old Mr. Ebner and me did it all. That was high grade work. We made some of the finest precision movements the company ever put out. We made, for example, three astronomical clocks for observatories. One went to Peru; one went to Yale University and one to some other university, I believe it was Catholic University in Washington.

“It took three two or three months for one ofthese jobs. Everything every wheel and pinion, had to be filed out by hand. They had to be perfect timekeepers, and they were tested over and over again for defects before they left our hands. They're used to make delicate astronomical observations. We made one later for Honolulu, and one was sent to a big jewelry store in Seattle, where they displayed it for advertising purposes.

“I don't subscribe to the belief that weather affects the movements. There may be a ? difference, but it is slight. But I will ? know that weight clocks are the best timekeepers. The astronomical clocks were all made with weights.

“Assembling and escaping, I should say, were the most difficult operations in clockmaking. Of course these days the work is all divided—and each man does something different —but as I've told you and Albecker has told you—when we learned the trade we had to assemble the entire movement.

“There were big factories in Gutenberg, where I learned the business, but there wasn't much machinery in use. All the parts were made by hand—about the only thing [i?] the way of machinery they used was a wheel cutter. But some of that hand work was pretty bad stuff, no matter what you hear to the contrary, and there are certain things they can make better with machinery, no doubt about it.

“In Germany in those days, they sent most of their clocks to England and Russia and few, if any, to America. But this country exported plenty. There were two big ? wholesale places

in Glasgow, for instance, one where they sold [Winsted?] clocks and another where they sold Seth Thomas and New [Hav n?] clocks.

“There were many English clockmakers in Thomaston when I first came, but only a few Swiss. There are no Swiss clockmakers here now, and I remember only one or two in my time.”